



Sign Her Up

Audrey Clark, widow of the late Jamie Clark, throws out the ceremonial first pitch at the dedication of Jamie Clark Memorial Stadium at East Central Community College last week. Jamie Clark was the baseball coach at ECCC for 14 years before losing his battle with cancer last July.

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Jamie Clark's widow, Audrey Clark, and their daughter, Nicki, stand next to the monument designating the baseball facility as "Jamie Clark Memorial Stadium."

ECCC Dedicates Baseball Stadium to former coach Jamie Clarke

East Central Community College officially named its baseball stadium in memory of former head baseball coach Jamie Clark during ceremonies held February 18 at Chris Gay IV Memorial Field on the Decatur campus. Clark's jersey was retired during the ceremony. The grey jersey - the same one he wore when the Diamond Warriors won the

state title in 1998 - will be permanently on display in the lobby of the Brackeen-Wood Physical Education Building. A replica of his jersey is also displayed on the right field fence next to a sign calling attention to the state title. Current ECCC Head Coach Jake Yarborough presented Audrey Clark with the white jersey her husband wore last year.



Jake Yarborough, ECCC head baseball coach who served as an assistant to Coach Clark, addresses the crowd as Clark's jersey #41 (shown in a shadow box) is officially retired. Pictured with Coach Yarborough are (from left) Dr. Phil A. Sutphin, ECCC president; Coach Tommy Clopton, master of ceremonies; Audrey Clark, her father, James Durr of Belzoni, daughter Nicki and her son Billy Turner of Slidell, La.; and Larry Blackburn, retired ECCC staff member who provided personal remarks about the longtime Diamond Warrior coach who lost his battle with cancer last summer. In the background are members of the 2002 ECCC baseball team.

Jamie Clark Memorial Stadium named at EC

Had longtime Warriors coach Jamie Clark been around the baseball field Monday afternoon at East Central Community College, his reaction would have been, "What were they thinking?"

They were thinking about how much Clark — EC's all-time winningest coach for all sports — had meant to them, the EC baseball program, and to EC in general.

On a postcard perfect mid-February afternoon, EC named its baseball facility Jamie Clark Memorial Stadium in honor of its 14-year coach who passed away last July after a bout with cancer.

"It's something we've been planning for a while," EC president Dr. Phil Sutphin said of the day's ceremonies that included the unveiling of a monument honoring Clark, a replica of his No. 41 jersey placed on the right field fence by the sign that honors his 1998 MACJC state championship team, and the presentation of his jersey from the '98 season which will be on display in the Brackeen-Wood Physical Education Building.

"Coach Clark meant so much to so many people and a lot of them are here today."

The crowd was easily the largest in the baseball stadium's history.

"He always had a smile and a lot of jokes," Sutphin said. "He's missed and we would hope that a day like today will be a fitting commemoration for his time at EC."

"Coach Clark's No. 41 will never be worn again by an East Central (baseball) player or coach, but will be permanently displayed in two prominent locations," current EC head baseball coach Jake Yarborough said.

"Although coach Clark is no longer with us, he will always be remembered in the place he called 'Warriorville.'"

"We felt like we wanted to honor Jamie the best way we knew how and we felt

like the replica of his jersey would be something we would see each game and remember him," said Ricky Harrison, EC drafting and design technology instructor.

Several other improvements to the stadium will be made in Clark's memory.

"We have a lot of things planned," Harrison said. "We're going to build some sidewalks around the stadium, plus we're going to try to cover the bleachers with a metal top. One of the main things is that we're going to brick from dugout to dugout about 18 inches high. That was something that Jamie always wanted."

Clark's widow, Audrey Clark; daughter, Nicki; and stepson, Billy Turner; were on hand for the ceremony. They all now live in Austin, Texas.

"Miss Audrey wanted to convey that the years Jamie spent here were not a job, but a way of life," said former EC instructor and personal friend of Clark, Larry Blackburn. "I believe everyone that knew Jamie would agree with that statement. It seemed if Jamie was not on this baseball field, he was at home reading about baseball or watching baseball on TV. He truly loved to talk about baseball."

"Today, I believe it is particularly fitting that Jamie be recognized for the positive influence he had on the young men that traveled through the East Central baseball program. By naming this facility Jamie Clark Memorial Stadium, all players and others will be reminded of the influence Jamie had on East Central Community College baseball."

Audrey Clark agreed that Jamie, who never liked to be in the spotlight, would be absolutely overwhelmed by the honor and turnout.

"Very much so, but his feelings are shared by us. We don't like all this attention either, but he's looking down and he's very proud. Everything is in honor of him and very well deserving."